(b) if so, the number of covered Wagons received by CIL during March, 1994 to March, 1995, month-wise details thereof;

(c) how far the coal supply to the consumers have been affected during this period in terms of tonnage because of short supply of Open Box Wagons;

(d) the reaction of the Government regarding short supply of Open Box Wagons; and

(e) what action Government propose to take in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) and (b) Coal India Limited indicate to Railways the names of the sidings where manual loading arrangements exists. Railways have the flexibility to supply either open or covered wagons in such sidings. According to information received from Ministry of Railways, 6647 rakes with covered wagons were provided from March, 1994 to March 1995 in manual sidings.

(c) According to Ministry of Railways there is no significant difference between the carrying capacity of Open and Covered wagons.

(d) and (e) Coal India Ltd. have intimated that due to shortage of wagons with the Railways, almost all the consumers are affected to some extent and it has become difficult to meet the demand of different consumers. Railways have been/are being requested to step up wagon availablity for coal movement.

Special Facilities for Export of Perishable Agricultural Products

*655. MAULANA OBAIDULLAH KHAN AZMI:

SHRI SANJAY DALMIA:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to refer to the answer to Unstarred Question 1997 given in the Rajya Sabha on 27th March, 1995 and state:

(a) whether Government propose to provide any special facility for the export of perishable agricultural products such as fruits, flowers and vegetables etc; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) and (b) Some of the facilities provided for export of perishable agricultural products such as fruits, flowers, and vegetables, inter-alia include :—

(i) Providing financial assistance for development of infrastructural facilities such as purchase of specialised transport units and establishment of pre-cooling/cold storage facilities;

(ii) Soft loans given for setting up of grading|processing centres, auction platforms, ripening|curing chambers and quality testing equipments;

(iii) Grant of financial assistance for improved packaging, and strengthening of quality control;

(iv) Establishment of walk-in-type cold storages for export consignments awaiting clearance;

(v) Setting up Air Cargo facilities for cargo booking and customs clearance facilities under one roof;

(vi) Streamlining and simplification of plant quarantine procedures and expeditious clearance of cargo.

Strategy to Boost Trade and Investment with Nepal

*656. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Prime Minister of Nepal has asked Indian Industrialists to invest in his country;

(b) if so, whether Government have worked out any strategy to boost trade with Nepal and also increase investment there; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Both Governments hold frequent mutual consultations at various levels on measures to promote bilateral trade and investment.

Units for Gold Jewellery Manufacture set-up by MMTC

*657. SHRI RAHASBIHARI BARIK: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether MMTC has entered into gold jewellery manufacture in a big way;

(b) if so, the number of units proposed to be set up by MMTC for this purpose;

(c) the total amount of investment proposed to be made by MMTC in each of these units;

(d) whether it is a part of MMTC's diversification programme; and

(e) the details of the other areas where MMTC proposes to start its business?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) No, Sir.

(b) to (d) Do not arise.

(e) MMTC has entered into Joint Ventures in areas such as aquaculture (marine products) and agro products and also proposes to diversify in areas such as jewellery, textiles, trade related infrastructure etc.

Wage Settlement between ITPO and Employees Union

*658. SHRI YERRA NARAYANASWAMY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether a wage settlement has been arrived at between ITPO and the Employees Union;

(b) whether service conditions and harmonious relations between management and employees and officers was also discussed; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir.

(c) A wage revision settlement defining scope and coverage, period of the agreement, minimum wages, pay scales, allowances, advances, medical expenses, discipline & punctuality, productivity and harmonious industrial relations, implementation aspects etc. has been signed between ITPO management and ITPO (ex-TFAI) Employees Union on 24-4-95.

Failure in producing good quality Coal

*659. SHRI PARMESHWAR KUMAR AGARWALLA: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India has totally failed in producing good quality coal;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether one of the reasons is lack of commitment of top management to work at area/mine leves;

(d) whether Government would consider involvement of a team of retired eminent Mining Engineers who could be entrusted with the task of improving the quality of coal by changing of mining method in opencast mining and underground mining;